Opening Statement of the Honorable Michael C. Burgess, M.D. Subcommittee on Commerce, Manufacturing, and Trade Hearing on "Examining Ways to Improve Vehicle and Roadway Safety" October 21, 2015

(As Prepared for Delivery)

Lives depend on the safety of cars and trucks on the road in the United States. And on the whole, the data is good around the decrease in fatalities against miles driven. But the hearings over the last two years have been sobering in their severity. There is no room for slow when it comes to safety and deception cannot be tolerated.

It is incumbent upon Congress, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, vehicle manufacturers and others in the automotive industry to ensure absolute compliance with current federal motor vehicle safety standards and processes. Again, lives depend on it. It is also our responsibility to revisit the adequacy of current safety standards and processes and determine whether they provide sufficient protections to our nation's motorists. This past year, it has been clear to me that they do not and that there are areas ripe for improvement.

To that end, the discussion draft that we will examine today includes modifications to certain federal motor vehicle safety standards and processes that will: enhance safety practices among automakers and NHTSA, provide more information to motorists about vehicle safety, and foster the development of new automotive technologies that will help save lives.

Some of these modifications include updating how NHTSA publicizes and makes recall information available to consumers. The discussion draft addresses how NHTSA coordinates with automakers before publicizing recall notices to consumers as well. These changes are intended to improve recall awareness by providing drivers with more complete information about a safety recall and giving them the means to take immediate action to get their vehicles fixed once a defect notice is received. The discussion draft also contains proposals intended to improve how NHTSA collects and analyzes vehicle safety information, and directs the agency to research the life-saving potential of crashworthiness features that could provide additional protections to the driving public.

To increase accountability and improve safety practices among vehicle manufacturers, the discussion draft extends their remedy and repair obligations under recalls, increases the time that they must maintain safety records to facilitate the identification of potential defects, and institutes safety incentives that encourage investment into next-generation safety technologies.

The staff discussion draft that we will examine today on vehicle and roadway safety is a continuation of this Subcommittee's efforts to, after a year of record recalls, restore confidence in American motorists that the cars they are driving are safe, that the recall process works, and that automakers and NHTSA are capable of keeping pace with the technology and complexity of cars of the future.

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